



ACCESS CURRENTS

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Board to Create Advisory Committee for Update of 508 Standards

The Board is organizing an advisory committee to assist in the update of its standards for electronic and information technology and its guidelines for telecommunications products. This committee will review these standards and guidelines and make recommendations to the Board on how they should be updated. The Board is seeking representatives from interested organizations and agencies to serve on the committee.

This committee will provide a collaborative forum for various interests and stakeholders to provide substantive and detailed input on the new standards and guidelines. In particular, the committee will be responsible for preparing recommendations to the Board on coverage of products and technologies, including new or convergent types, solutions to identified access barriers, the content of new or revised specifications and criteria, and their harmonization with comparable international efforts in this area.

The committee's recommendations will be used to revise standards for electronic and information technology procured by Federal agencies that were issued under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Published by the Board in December 2000, these standards cover computer hardware and software, websites, phone systems, fax machines, copiers, and similar technologies. While limited to technologies procured by the Federal government, the standards have had a broader impact by promoting product accessibility beyond this market. The committee also will advise the Board on updating guidelines it issued under the Telecommunications Act. These guidelines cover access to products designed, developed and manufactured in the U.S. and are not limited to those procured by the Federal government. Provisions in the Section 508 standards for telecommunications products are based on these earlier guidelines. For this reason, the Board plans to update both documents jointly.

The continuously evolving nature of the technologies covered make periodic review and update essential in keeping accessibility criteria current. This effort marks the first update of both the 508 standards and the guidelines for telecommunications equipment. As part of this update, the Board will also seek to coordinate its work with international counterparts, such as the European Union, to further advance global harmonization and standardization.

Advisory committees have become a standard feature of the Board's rulemaking process and were used in developing the original 508 standards and the Telecommunications Act guidelines. The Board structures committees to represent a broad, yet balanced, range of interests and experts. For this new committee, the Board seeks representation from the telecommunications and electronic and information technology industry, disability groups, Federal agencies, and others with an interest in the issues to be explored. Instructions for submitting applications are included in a *Federal Register* notice posted on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/sec508/comm-notice.htm. The deadline is May 18, 2006.

For further information, contact Tim Creagan, the Board's Section 508 Access Specialist at creagan@access-board.gov (e-mail), (202) 272-0016 (voice), or (202) 272-0081 (TTY).

Previous Board committees have helped establish or update accessibility criteria in various areas:

Recreation Facilities
(1993-94)

ADAAG Review
(1994-96)

Play Areas
(1996-97)

Telecommunications
(1996-97)

Outdoor Developed
Areas
(1997-99)

Electronic &
Information Technology
(1998-99)

Passenger Vessels
(1998-2000)

Public Rights-of-Way
(1999-2000)

Courthouses
(2004-)



David Bibb Elected Chair of the Board

The U.S. Access Board elected David L. Bibb chairman at its March meeting. Bibb, Acting Administrator of the General Services Administration (GSA), represents GSA on the Board. GSA acquires space, products, and services for Federal agencies and aids the office operations of more than one million Federal workers. It also plays a lead role in setting government-wide policies and procedures. Before being named Acting Administrator last November, Bibb served as GSA's Deputy Administrator and in that capacity worked closely with GSA's senior leadership team to devise policy and to provide management and acquisition services to other Federal agencies. Bibb, who has 35 years of service with GSA, previously held several executive positions in the Public Buildings Service, which manages GSA's accessibility program. Last year he served a term as the Access Board's vice chair.

Board chairs serve for a term of one year. Bibb succeeds Jan Tuck, a public member from Santa Clarita, California. Public member James R. ("J.R.") Harding, II, Ed.D. of Tallahassee, Florida was elected vice chair. Harding is a Partnership Specialist with the Florida Department of Education's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Side-by-Side Comparison of Old and New ADAAG, IBC Available

The Board has issued a comparison between the new ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), the original ADA standards, and the International Building Code. This side-by-side comparison is arranged and ordered according to the format and sequence of the new ADAAG, which the Board published in July 2004. Provisions in the ADA Standards maintained by the Department of Justice, which currently are based on the original ADAAG (1991), are provided alongside corresponding sections of the new ADAAG. The Department of Justice is in the process of updating its ADA standards according to the new ADAAG. The comparison is available in a variety of formats on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/comparison/index.htm.

APPLICATION, ADMINISTRATION AND SCOPE		
New ADAAG The new ADAAG is a comprehensive set of guidelines for the design and construction of accessible facilities. It covers a wide range of building types and components, including entrances, circulation, communication, and information. The new ADAAG is based on the latest research and best practices in accessibility.	Old ADAAG The old ADAAG is a set of guidelines for the design and construction of accessible facilities. It covers a wide range of building types and components, including entrances, circulation, communication, and information. The old ADAAG is based on the latest research and best practices in accessibility.	International Building Code (IBC) The International Building Code (IBC) is a model building code that provides minimum requirements for the design and construction of buildings. It covers a wide range of building types and components, including entrances, circulation, communication, and information. The IBC is based on the latest research and best practices in building safety and accessibility.

In updating ADAAG, the Board sought to reconcile differences from model building codes, including the International Building Code (IBC). Used by a growing number of states and local jurisdictions, the IBC contains scoping provisions for accessibility and references the technical criteria of the ANSI A117.1 standard, a voluntary consensus standard issued by American National Standards Institute. The comparison includes accessibility provisions of the IBC, including those referenced in the ANSI standard. For further information on the IBC, visit the International Code Council's website at www.iccsafe.org.

Courthouse Access Advisory Committee to Meet in Miami

The Courthouse Access Advisory Committee will hold its next quarterly meeting May 18th and 19th in Miami. This committee was organized by the Board to prepare best practice recommendations for the design of accessible courthouses. In addition, the committee is exploring outreach and partnership opportunities for disseminating the information to be developed. At this meeting, the Committee will review and discuss deliverables developed to date by three subcommittees. The meetings will be held at the Miami Hyatt Regency, 400 SE Second Avenue. The meetings, which are open to the public, will start at 9:00 both days and end at 5:00 on the first day and at 3:00 on the second. Information on the work of the committee, including minutes from previous meetings, is available on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/caac/index.htm. For further information, contact Dave Yanchulis at caac@access-board.gov (e-mail), (202) 272-0026 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Board Sponsors Research and Technical Guidance Initiatives

The Board is underwriting several projects this year to develop technical guidance and to further research in a variety of areas. Two projects will build upon research undertaken by other entities on accessible public rights-of-way. A third project will focus on accessible information in transportation systems.

Rights-of-Way Research and Guidance

The Board is currently preparing new guidelines for accessible public rights-of-ways and has been active in fostering research to facilitate this effort. Leading areas of investigation have focused on challenges to accessibility for pedestrians with vision impairments. The Board is providing funds to expand a study on outdoor wayfinding cues by the Western Michigan University. This project is using human subject testing to gauge the relative effectiveness of various wayfinding cues, including returned curb edges, curb ramp orientation, tactile surfaces, and guide strips, for people with vision impairments in outdoor environments. The Board's supplemental funding will increase the test sample.

Another key area of study is access at traffic roundabouts, which by their design and continuous traffic flow patterns pose unique challenges to pedestrians with little or no vision. The Federal Highway Administration has completed a study to assess available pedestrian signal technologies for use at roundabouts. The Board will fund a subsequent phase to identify specific criteria for roundabout crossings.

Communication Access in Transportation Systems

A new project will be undertaken to develop guidance on access to public information in transportation systems. This includes public announcements, signs, and messages provided in facilities such as bus stops, rail stations, and airports, and aboard vehicles. The guidance to be developed will offer best practices for ensuring that such information is accessible to people with physical or sensory impairments. This project will explore transportation industry initiatives that have produced useful models of accessible devices, systems, and technologies applicable in the station and vehicle environment. Public comments the Board received in updating its ADA Accessibility Guidelines called attention to the need for this guidance. These concerns were reinforced at a public forum the Board held last July on the ADA's 15th anniversary by participants who urged the Board to provide more technical assistance for transportation providers and manufacturers, facility designers, and transportation system operating agencies and organizations about accessibility requirements and exemplary practices in communications. In coming weeks, the Board will issue a request for proposals for this project.

For further information, contact Lois Thibault, the Board's research coordinator, at research@access-board.gov (e-mail), (202) 272-0023 (voice), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

ADA & IT Technical Assistance Centers Seek Public Feedback

The ADA & IT Technical Assistance Centers, a federally supported network of ten regional centers that provide information, training, and technical assistance on the ADA, seek comments on people's experiences under the law. Feedback is requested on employment, building access, and public services, among other topics. The Centers will use this input to identify training gaps and issues where additional technical assistance and guidance is needed. Previously known as the Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers, they provide a comprehensive "one-stop" source of guidance and training on all aspects of the ADA. Comments can be submitted through a brief online survey form on the centers' central website at www.adata.org. For further information, contact the centers at (800) 949-4232 (voice/TTY).



ICDR Seeks Input from the Public on Disability Research

The Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR), which promotes coordination and cooperation among Federal agencies conducting rehabilitation research programs, seeks input from stakeholders and the public on priorities for research. Research recommendations are sought pertaining to emergency preparedness, a growing area of interest, as well as schools, health care services, transportation, housing, and personal assistance services. Suggestions can be submitted using an online entry form available at ICDR's website at www.icdr.us/. In addition, ICDR will host a public forum on the subject to foster a dialogue on ways of improving future research and assessing existing research. The meeting will be held May 23 in Washington, D.C. at the Capital Hilton Hotel. For further details, contact Robert Jaeger of the ICDR at (202) 245-7386 (v), (202) 205-4475 (TTY), or Robert.Jaeger@ed.gov (email).

New On-Line Resources on Emergency Preparedness

Several new sources of information on emergency preparedness are available online through the work of the Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities which is comprised of representatives from the Department of Homeland Security and other Federal departments. These include:

- The Disability Preparedness Resource Center (www.disabilitypreparedness.gov) a leading source of information on emergency preparedness for people with disabilities and the Council's official site
- Emergency Transportation Website for People with Disabilities (www.emergencyprep.dot.gov), a site made available by the Department of Transportation to provide information on accessible evacuation
- "Preparing the Workplace for Everyone" (www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/ep/preparing2.htm), a guide for Federal agencies in ensuring that their emergency plans adequately cover the needs of employees with disabilities.

Access Currents is a free newsletter issued by the Access Board every other month by mail and e-mail. Send questions or comments to news@access-board.gov or call (800) 872-2253 ext. 0026 (voice) or (800) 993-2822 (TTY). Mailing address: 1331 F Street, N.W., Suite 1000; Washington, D.C. 20004-1111.

Volume 12 No. 2 March/ April 2006

Page 4



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